Who is the country's best cook?

You are!

This is the conclusion reached by the nation's outstanding food experts after sixteen years of evaluating untold thousands of recipes and the actual cooking in open competition of several thousand national finalists in the annual National Chicken Cooking Conest~~s~~.

Conceived seventeen years ago as a consequence of the first national effort to improve chickens - and it was at this point that the scientific pressures that made chicken the most inexpensive meat in our diet began - the National Chicken Cooking Contest is an outgrowth of the first Chicken of Tomorrow competition.

Perhaps it was also at this moment that agricultural leaders recognized the need to take a page from the book of industry and business. They ~~and~~ began ~~back~~ ~~not only~~ to make their operations more scientific and ~~but~~ to resort to modern ~~newly-evolved~~ promotional techniques.

The non-commercial contest is held every ~~ma~~ June on the Delmarva Peninsula, the friendly tri-State area between the Delaware and Chesepeake Bays, formed by Deleware, the Eastern Shore of Maryland and two counties of Virginia. Claiming, Delmarva is ~~to be~~ the home of the commercial broiler-fryer, agricultural leaders ~~in Delmarva~~ organized the non-profit Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc., whose major function is the staging of the chicken cooking contest in collaboration with the Poultry and Egg National Board.

Here for three days the winners of eliminations in the various states gather for the moment of truth. Ranging in age from 8 to 80, they line up, as many as fifty at a time, and prepare their own recipes which are then secretly judged by the nation's foremost ~~outstanding~~ food authorities. ~~experts.~~

And it is true, the winners - the nation's best cooks - are just ordinary, every-day people. Most of them have been housewives, many farmers' wives. ~~Night~~-club entertainers Stet, professional people, students, business ~~people,~~ executives, office workers, even farmers! have been adjudged "The Champ."

By the end of the festivities there usually have been a hundred thousand people or more observing some or all of the events. This year the competiton will be held at picturesque Easton, Md., on June 18, 19 and 20. With beaches, fishing areas and numerous other recreational facilities abounding on the ~~Exxtar~~ peninsula, crowds are expected to at least equal previous attendance records.

~~With the~~ State cookoffs are now in progress, so it is not yet known how many contestants will appear in ~~be entre entered~~ the four divisions. ~~but indications are there will more than 300.~~ About 300 are expected. While major interest and attention centers on the "Senior" or adult contest, traditionally some of the best cooking and most pleasing ~~attractive~~ recipes have been by teenagers and pre-teens.

Dishes ~~will~~ range from simple, GOOD-LOOKING ~~and attractive~~ preparations to ~~presentations to~~ elaborate presentations that ~~may~~ rival the work of the fanciest professional chefs. ~~More~~ Often the simpler recipes are ~~judged~~ rated higher, for while appearance is considered important, nothing is more important than taste. ~~That~~ And, of course, ~~is~~ the essential purpose of the contest is to create and popularize new and delicious ways of serving chicken.

~~For the contestants, some of whom get excited and flustered and forget things and make mistakes they remember later with great embarrassment, the whole thing thing is the experience of a lifetime, a great big ball. Combined with the fabled hospitality of the area is the open adulation of thousands of admiring cooks and those who just enjoy good food, the friendly assistance ant suggestions of rivals, competitors,~~

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For the contestants, even after the ~~experience~~ excitement of the State cookoffs, the national contest is the experience of a lifetime, a great big ball. Some get excited and flustered. Once I was burned by my next-stove neighbor. Some make simple mistakes, like forgetting the salt, which they recall too late and with blushes and embarrassment.

~~But~~ The all-pervading friendliness is catching. Competitors help each other with suggestions and by lending ingredients and utensils. ~~And~~ Combined with the fabled hospitality of the area is the open admiration of thousands of admiring good cooks. Add to this the popping bulbs of press cameras, the flattering inquiries of radio interviewers, ~~and~~ the thrill of the competition and the lure of valuable prizes, and for one flashing, fleeting moment Mrs. Ordinary Houseife feels like Mrs. America.

the ~~flashing~~ popping bulbs of press cameras, the inquiries of radio interviewers and the thrill of the competition. For one flashing, fleeting moment Mrs. Joe Doaks feels like Mrs. America!

My wife and I have savored this previous moment many times. After one unsuccessful venture, she became the "Queen" in 1956 when she won first prize in the Senior Division. In six of the following seven years I have unsuccessfully sought to equal her accomplishment, ~~but~~ The best I could do was to place 10th. two years ago. But I regard this as more of an achievement that winning first place in the outdoor division in 1959, which made me the "National Barbecue King." This year, if I survive the eliminations, I'll be in both the Senior Division and the new "appliance Division", created to provide new recipes for the handy gadgets fashioned by the electrical industry.

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¶ Picture opportunities are almost limitless, and the same is true of recipes.

¶ The story can be illuminated with numerous incidents if desired.

(4) The festival has the form of an old fashioned country fair. It has

beauty contests;

art shows and contests;

handicraft displays;

exhibitions of the newest poultry equipment and techniques;

fancy marching teams, bands, strutting majorettes;

perhaps the worlds largest fireman's parade, with hundreds of pieces of glittering equipment;

the world's largest frying pan, cooking chicken from dawn until well after dark; ~~and~~

and, of course, many politicians.

(2) The association which arranges and finances the event is unique in American agriculture. ~~They~~ It raises about $150,000.00 ~~each year~~ yearly to finance it, quite an accomplishment for rural folk. In it men who are bitter competitors all year long forget their business rivalries and cooperate unselfishly.

(4) The cooking is in shifts, with contestants lined up about fifty at a time, at long rows of stoves loaned by manufacturers and distributors. Everything is done in the open, except the judging, which is in a room to which all access is denied. Recipes are identified only by numbers. Cooks are roped off from the general public. Description of various divisions.

(3) Central figure in the function if Frank Gordy, a pre-eminent poultry scientist and ~~an~~ college professor who combines a courtly, old-fashioned manner with the vision and imagination of a Madison Avenue pro. He runs the association.

(1) The original ~~A&P~~ - Chicken of Tomorrow Contest - which chicken grew to the best yield of meat in the shortest time and a lowest cost. This was the beginning of a revolution in poultry agriculture.